Trains Album of Photographs

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

Great Northern Railway

Number 15

Trains Album of Railroad Photographs Book 15

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

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Leader of the Great Northern passenger fleet is the Empire Builder, transcontinental limited which is now being streamlined and Diesel powered to cross the Northwest from Chicago to Seattle in 45 hours or less. The naming of this train in 1929 was a sheer stroke of genius, for it not only perpetuates the nickname of James J. Hill who built the Great Northern, but it epitomizes the role which the railroad itself has played in the development of the vast empire of the Northwest.

The main line of the Big G is not just a slender thread of steel strung across the nearly 2000 miles between the Twin Cities, the head of Lake Superior, and Puget Sound. It is a real network of branches and alternate routes, each feeding and sustaining the other. Jim Hill knew that a railroad in a potentially rich country could literally pull itself up by its own bootstraps, and he built a territory and a business as well as a main line. Result is that Great Northern originates on its own rails the surprising figure of four-fifths of its freight traffic.

This traffic is a catalogue of American natural resources — iron ore from the Mesabi rolling down to Lake Superior in 10,000 ton trains; wheat from the rolling fields of the Dakotas, Montana and Minnesota; apples from the Wenatchee Valley in Washington; livestock, petroleum, cement, barley, rye, flax, lignite, lumber, fish, soft fruits, and potatoes.

But to the traveler the resources of Jim Hill's empire are not as evident or as enjoyable as the superb scenery of the Rocky Mountain crossing in northwestern Montana. For 60 gorgeous mountain-fringed miles the railroad forms the southern boundry of Glacier National Park, and in these miles it crosses the continental divide at the lowest elevation of any railroad north of New Mexico. This mountain crossing is a tribute to the engineering genius of John F. Stevens, whose statue stands along the line near Summit Station. Well might he be immortalized in stone, for it was he who explored Marias Pass through which the Empire Builder runs from Atlantic to Pacific watersheds at only 5213 feet above sea level.

West of Glacier Park trains wind through river valleys cut deep into the rocky backbone of the mountains and filled with the rush of clear, fresh water. Lush and green is this mid-mountain wonderland. Near Whitefish the traveler can see, from the north side of the car, a marvelous panorama of half a dozen 10,000-foot peaks ranged beyond the far shores of bright blue Whitefish Lake.

Motive power ranges from the Mallet compounds and simple articulateds which haul the heavy ore trains down to light Diesel switchers. It even includes straight electric locomotives used over the Cascade Mountains west of Wenatchee through the eight-mile Cascade Tunnel, longest on the American continent. Steam locomotives are characterized by the square shoulders of the Belpair firebox. A large and growing fleet of 5400-horsepower Diesel freight locomotives is smartly used for fullest possible mileage. For instance, high-speed freight Diesels pull passenger trains one way between Duluth and Minneapolis, freight the other way. Light road Diesels pull passenger trains on medium length runs and do switching work to fill in the 24 hours.

Fastest train over the main line now is the romantic Fast Mail, solid mail and express except for a rider coach. The time of the streamlined Empire Builder will be faster than the Northwest's top mail train. This train leaves St. Paul five minutes ahead of the present Empire Builder's schedule, arriving Seattle three hours ahead at the uncomfortable but practical hour of 5 a. m., in time for morning mail delivery. No one but a railfan would think of riding No. 27 clear through, yet it remains as important a train as even the Empire Builder to the Great Northern territory.

In this collection of fine photographs we have tried to select the essence of Great Northern. As with other books in the series the pictures are printed with special methods upon a paper stock which reproduces as nearly as possible the effect of an original photograph. Your comments are appreciated.

TRAINS ALBUM OF PHOTOGRAPHS

By the Editors of Trains Magazine

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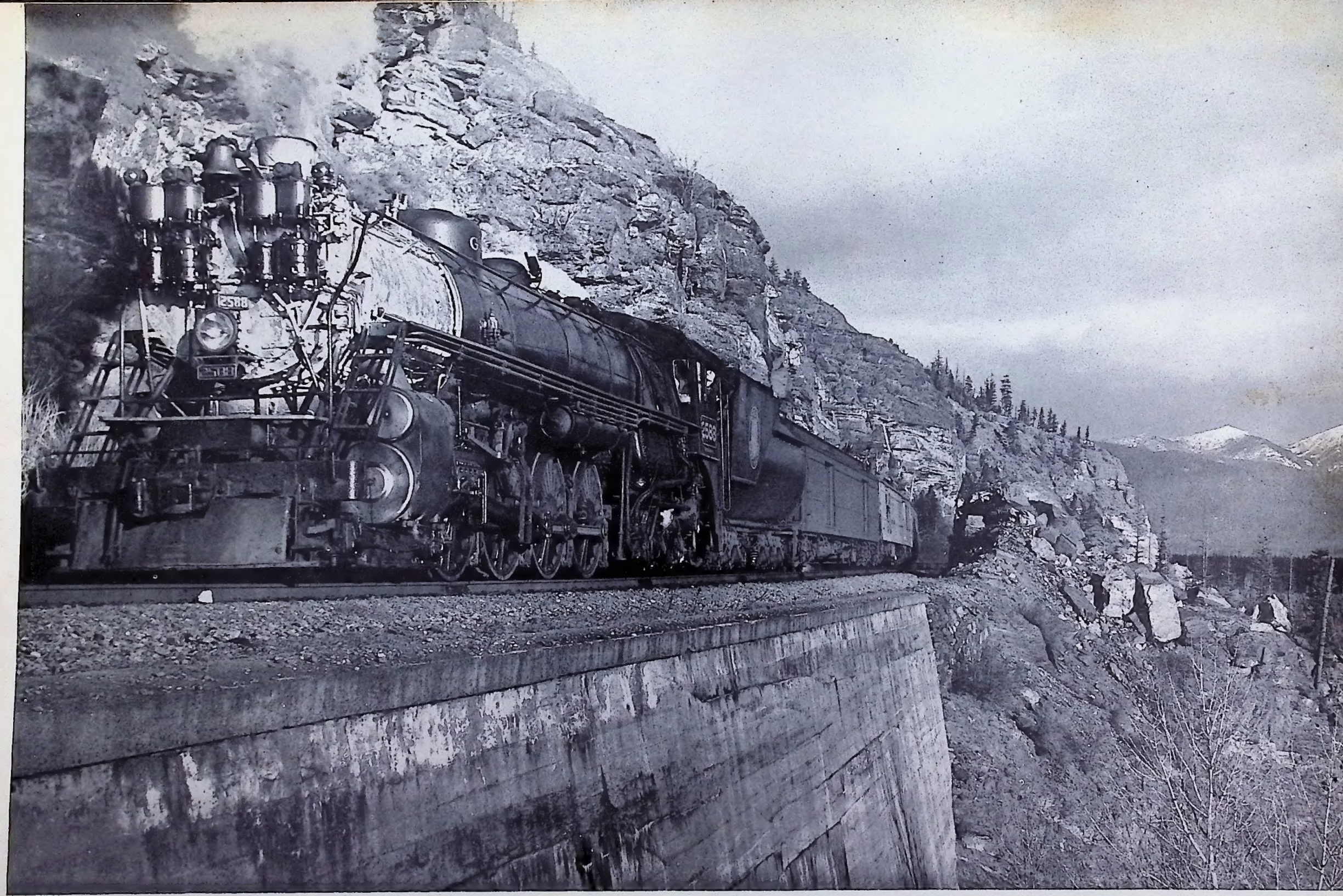


A continuous parade of mountain grandeur can be seen by passengers on Great Northern transcontinental trains, which follow the southern boundary of Glacier National Park for 60 miles. The Empire Builder travels this portion of the route in daylight. Train in photo is the pre-streamlining Empire Builder.

Summit Station is at the highest point of the system. This is Stevens Pass, named after John F. Stevens who discovered this lowest northern route across the continental divide. Mountains of Glacier National Park are in the distance.

A Great Northern freight train comes to a stop at Hancock, Minn., on the main line 149 miles west of St. Paul. Train order signal indicates orders for this train.

Great Northern westbound trains leave downtown St. Paul headed east, but promptly swing around wide curves toward the west. Photo by William J. Pontin.

Between St. Paul and Minneapolis Great Northern, as well as Northern Pacific, Burlington and Chicago & North Western trains, use the GN's massive stone arch bridge. Below at right is a section of the Empire Builder backing into the St. Paul station after arriving from Chicago behind a Burlington vestibule cab 4-8-4. Photo by H. W. Pontin.

Across the northern United States the through mails to Seattle travel on Great Northern rails as No. 27, the Fast Mail. The string of storage and sorting cars, with a coach or two at the rear end, carries all the romance of the postal service.

It takes all kinds of motive power to run a railroad, including this little old 2-8-0 which is doing yard duty at Great Falls, Mont. Both photos by W. R. McGee.

It also takes big locomotives to run a railroad, heavy articulated locomotives such as this 2-8-8-2 which is working full steam up the west slope of the Cascade Mountains at less than 10 miles an hour with a helper on the rear of its 91-car train. Photo by S. B. Hertz.

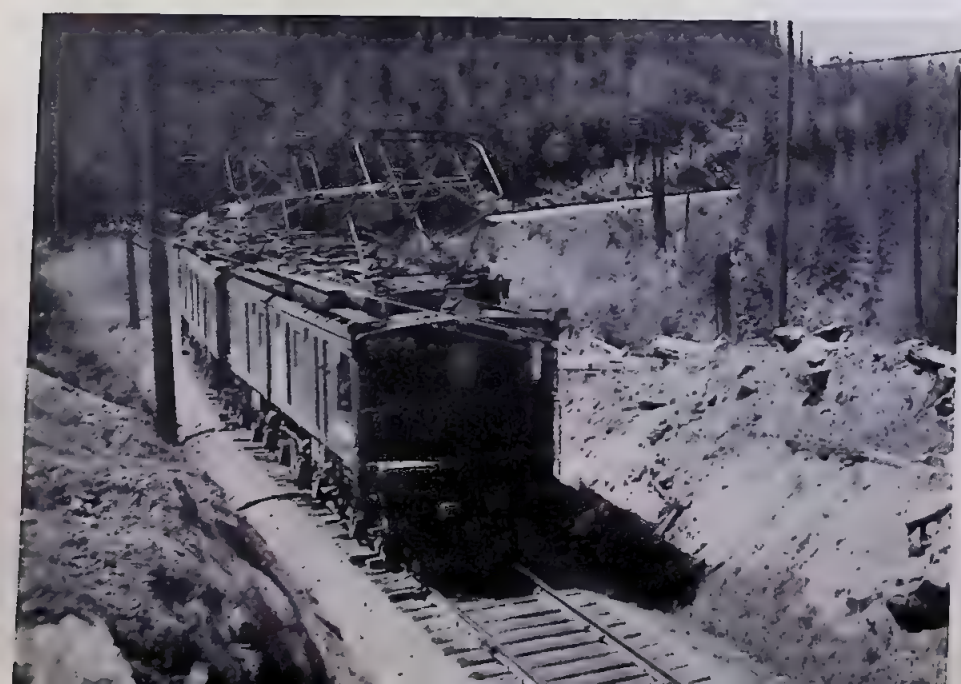
Another place where the Big G makes good use of heavy articulated locomotives is in hand.ing the iron ore traffic to the head of Lake Superior. Ore trains run surprisingly heavy, more than 10,000 tons being a normal gross load. Each of the stubby cars carries more than 75 tons of ore. Scene is Gunn, Minn., a junction.

Skykomish, Wash., is the east end of the long one per cent grade up the west slope of the Cascades. It is also the west end of the Cascade Tunnel electrification and the hefty 2-8-8-2 which has just arrived with 5153 tons is waiting to be cut off and replaced with an electric. W. R. McGee photo.

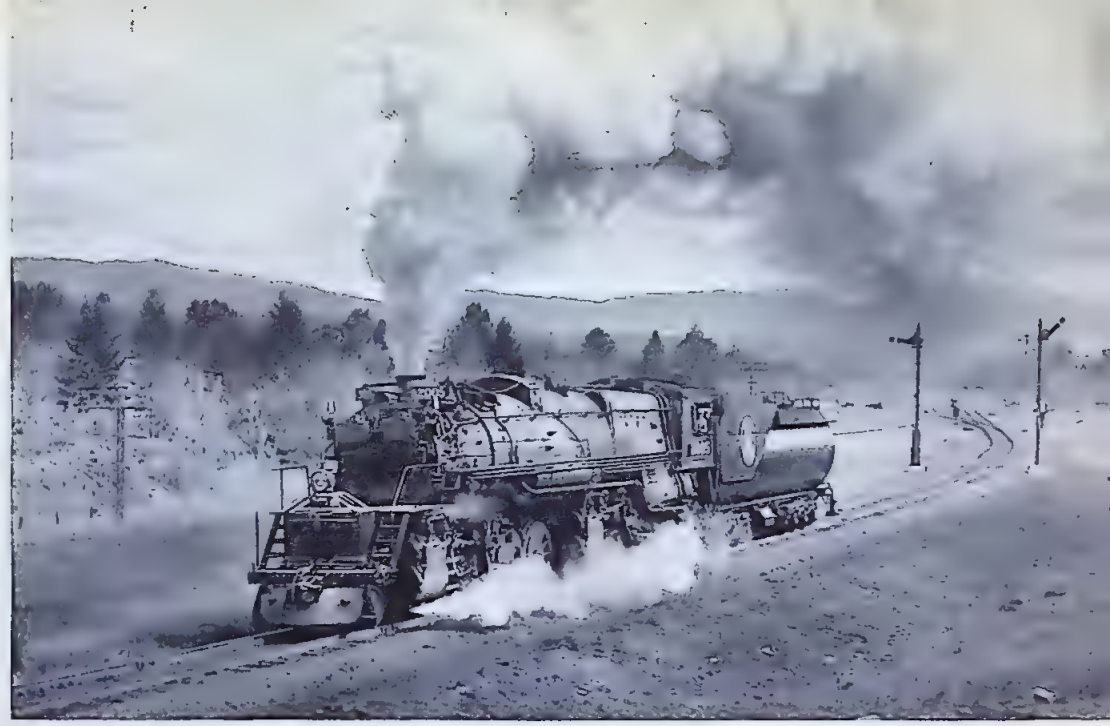
A 2-8-8-2 simple articulated climbing the east slope of the continental divide east of Glacier National Park with a 65-car freight train. Photo by Henry Griffiths.

Diesel power is taking over much of the job of steam on the Great Northern, especially the mountainous western end of the system. Pulling 106 cars, the 5400 horsepower Diesel at right is rounding a Rocky Mountain curve near Blacktail, Mont. A 4050 horsepower pusher is on the rear end of the train. Passenger Diesel below is one of five which pull the new Empire Builder. Color scheme is Great Northern orange, Pullman green and yellow. Three-unit freight Diesel at right is helping the steam powered Empire Builder.

Electric motive power has not been neglected on Great Northern in spite of the increasing use of Diesel. In the west electricity generated by water power furnishes power without using up irreplaceable natural resources. Above is a new streamlined electric. Photo by Stuart Hertz.



Cascade Tunnel electrification was originally three phase with double trolley, but was changed to single phase single trolley some years before the new tunnel was built in 1929. Smaller photos show day train, the Cascadian, on 2.2 per cent grade near west portal. Photos by W. R. McGee.



The sleek new streamlined Empire Builder will never quite replace in the minds of veteran travelers the comfortable standard train which held down the name and schedule for so many years. The roomy solarium and the taste-famed diner and the Pullmans were home for two and one-half days between Chicago and Seattle to thousands of western tourists. Above is the old Empire at Shelby, Mont. The light engine at right is a 2-8-8-0 running light through Whitefish, Mont., on its way to Spokane to take a troop special back east. Photo by H. W. Pontin. Below is a general view of the division point yards at Whitefish, station at right.

Benson, Minn., is junction point of one of the many branches which helped build both Great Northern and its territory. Here a mainline train stops while mail and passengers are transferred to the gas-electric car which runs to Huron, S. D.

Cascade Tunnel, longest on the American continent, under Stevens Pass in the Cascade Mountains of Washington.

In early October the famous Washington apples start to move east out of Appleyard at Wenatchee. Way freights bring them in from packing houses and long extras carry them eastward. Great Northern handles more apples than any other railroad.

This is one of the apple specials working eastward near Troy, Mont., in the western tip of the state. This "fruit" is running as second section of No. 436, regularly scheduled time freight. Dispatchers prefer second sections which have more rights on the road to extras. W. R. McGee photo.

At right is a complete Great Northern freight train, locomotive, 44 cars and caboose, in a remarkable photo by W. R. McGee. It is entering a tunnel on the branch between Helena and Butte. Train below is at Olney, west of Whitefish.

Mountains and evergreens and clear Rocky Mountain stream, and the Great Northern. A scene near Libby, Mont., by W. R. McGee.

Across Montana's rolling miles Great Northern offers every variety of real mountain action. The 2-8-8-2 at right is moving 3010 tons along the north fork of the Flathead River near Pinnacle, Mont. Photo by W. R. McGee. Passenger train below is a troop special, moving up the Divide at Spotted Robe, Mont. Photo by W. J. Pontin. Butte-Great Falls freight is on grade at Steuben. H. W. Pontin photo.

Just east of Fort Wright in Spokane, Wash., is the bridge over the Spokane River used by both Great Northern and the Spokane, Portland & Seattle, joint subsidiary of GN and Northern Pacific. This is No. 2, the Portland connection for the Empire Builder and the North Coast Limited. W. R. McGee photo.

The route of the Empire Builder in Glacier National Park. Great Northern photo.